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Korean Paduk - Past and Present

1 / Introduction of Paduk to the Korean Peninsula

The exact origin of Paduk is uncertain, but it is believed that Paduk had its beginnings in China (Yao-Sun period, 2,000~3,000B.C.).

We presume that it was introduced to Korea, along with other aspects of Chinese culture, during the Ko Chosun Period (2,333B.C.~108 B.C.). It was later introduced to Japan through Korea, and the game became a part of the three oriental national cultures.

There are two theories behind the introduction of Paduk from China to Korea. One is the Kija transmission theory (1) and the other, the Hansagun transmission theory (2).

(1) Kija theory: Kija (Chi-tzu in Chinese), a scholarly noble man of the Shang dynasty was said to have come to Korea around 1,000 B.C. with 5,000 followers. He taught the peninsula people a way of life, based on the Chinese culture. This included the introduction of Paduk. At that time, Paduk entered Korean society, and Paduk has been a part of its culture ever since.

(2) Hansagun theory: After the fall of Ko Chosun (Old Chosun) 108 B.C., four Chinese administrative regions were set up by the Han dynasty with the specific task of keeping the Koreans under their control. During this period, the trade between China and these regions was so extensive that they served as a focal point of cultural exchange. Paduk was introduced to Korea during this time.

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3 / The First Recording of Paduk in the Korean History Books

The story of the monk Torim appears in the Samguk Sagi (history of the three kingdoms), written by Kim Bu-Sik (1075-1151). The monk Torim, one of the strongest Paduk players in Koguryo, went to Paekche, pretending that he had fled Koguryo.

With his status as a monk status, and exceptional playing skills, Torim could easily approach and befriend king Kaero of Paekche, who himself was a Paduk addict.

After pretending he had fled Koguryo, gaining the trust of Kaero, Torim proposed many constructional works such as, new palaces and temples that would 'enhance' Paekche's culture, and the king's standing. For Koguryo, it meant that Paekche's resources would be channeled into construction rather than into the upkeep of the military.

So in 475 AD, king Changsu of Koguryo invaded Paekche with an expeditionary force of 30,000 that took Paekche's capital Hanansong, located south of modern Seoul. King Kaero was killed in the ensuing battle. King Kaero's crown prince Moonju was forced to move Paekche's capital to Ungjin, modern Kongju, in south Chungchung province .

This incident became the Paduk's biggest involvement of Paduk in the rise and fall of the nation's power groups.*Besides the story of king Kaero, both Korean and Chinese history books provide evidence that Paduk was popular during the three kingdom period.

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4 / A Symbol of Elegant Life, Koryo dynasty (918-1392)

Paduk was widespread and popular with the upper class during the Koryo dynasty. The tradition and play among the aristocrats continued until the massive Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592, mid-Yi dynasty.

The history books show that King Yejong, King Kongmin of Koryo, and Princes Yangyung and Anpyung of Chosun were all fond of playing Paduk. The first recording of a game was inscribed on a rock that was located in Tanyang, Chungchung province, this was done by Woo Tak.

Yi Saek who wrote the earliest known literature, Kigi on Paduk, a well-known patriotic scholar Chung Mong-Joo, general Kang Jo and Choi Chung-Hun who used to play Paduk in the battle camps, and the Seven Hermits of Koryo were also Paduk lovers.

Yi dynasty (1392-1910) scholars such as Yi Kyu-Bo, Suh Gu-Jung, Shin Sook-Joo, Yi Suk-Hyun, and Sung Hyun recognized Paduk as a necessary romantic pursuit for the literati. Consequently there are many poems, composed by them These are now easily found.

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5 / Expanding Popularity, Mid Yi Dynasty

When Japan invaded Korea in 1592, Paduk became popular not only among and upper class Yang Ban, but also with the middle class bureaucrats.

It was not thought that Paduk was simply a leisurely game; it was one of four indispensable arts for the literati - the other three being music, calligraphy and painting. Yu Sung-Ryong is known as the inventor of Sunjang Paduk, the Korean style of Paduk that was later played by the revered general Admiral Yi Sun-Shin during battle.

Evidence of this was discovered in battle diaries written by Admiral Yi. Paduk was not only a game played by famous historical figures, but also the subject of different pieces of writing. Huh Nansul-Hun was one of the early female authors. The first Paduk essay Hyuk Ki Ron was written by Yi Duk-Moo, and later another writer Chung Won-Yong wrote Ki Sul.

These writings in themselves are evidence that Paduk was extremely popular during that time. And it was from this time that the Kuk Su lineage formed. The first Kuk Su Yi Duk-Won, used to play with the Ming general Yi Yu-Song, who was based in Korea with the Chinese troops to support Korea against the Japanese invasion (1592-1598).

The first lineage began with Yi Duk-Won, who was later succeeded by Yoon Hong-Im, Yoo Chan-Hong, famous painter Choi Chil-Chil, Shin Kyung and Hwang-Oh. This first lineage is known through written records.

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6 / Late Yi Dynasty

With the influx of Western civilization, the modern form of Japanese Paduk (Go) was also introduced to Korea.

Its style spread rapidly until the end of the Yi dynasty, during which time both Sun Jang Paduk and Japanese Paduk co-existed. The 2nd lineage of Kuk Su started from Kim Man-Soo and progressed to Paek Nam-Kyu Yoon Kyung-Moon and Noh Sa-Cho.

At this time, they only played Sun Jang Paduk, which was unique in how the game started. "Before the game, 16 stones are put on the board, black plays first move on Chun Won (tengen) and from there immediately the fight begins". This way, opponents cannot avoid fighting. Based on this tradition, the style of Korean Paduk that displays a strong sense of fighting has enabled Korean players to dominate, as they can confidently handle any situation that arises. From time to time professional Japanese players visited Korea to play games with Korean Kuk Su. The first Ki-Won (Paduk place) was established at the summer house of Min Yung-Hui, brother of Queen Min.

And it was at this place that the inaugural Nation Wide Competition of Paduk was held, with the support of Mae-Il daily.

A Paduk game record book Ki Bo, written by Choi Nam-Sun, and Paduk monthly magazine Shin Jung Ki Bo were also published.

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7 / The New Era

In 1945, immediately after the World War II, Han Sung Ki Won was established by Cho Nam-Chul, who had studied Paduk in Japan. 1945 became the inaugural year of modern Korean Paduk. The association name changed from Han Sung Ki Won to Cho Sun Ki Won, and finally to Dae Han Ki Won, which became the mother body of the present day head office, Han Guk Ki Won.

Professional games began in 1950 after Dae Han Ki Won held the first Paduk championship. With the establishment of Han Guk Ki Won, Paduk found a place in society. Han Guk Kiwon was established in January 1954 as an incorporated body and in June 1955, a competition was held to recruit professional players.

Han Guk Kiwon promoted Paduk steadily in society and also increased people's understanding about Paduk.

In 1956, the first professional title Kuk Su No 1 was sponsored by Dong-A Daily (a leading Korean newspaper). In 1959, The Top Five League was sponsored by the Seoul Daily and another national tournament, Choe Go Wi, was sponsored by the Pusan Daily. Cho Nam-Chul (Cho Chi-Hun's uncle) dominated all the competitions during that time until the return of Kim In from Japan in 1963. Cho Nam-Chul was soon defeated. Kim In's "one-man domination" of the tournament lasted for over 10 years, well into the mid 70's. Hanguk Kiwon suffered from factional antagonism for several months in 1974, causing a division in the group. Fortunately, this did not last long before differences were resolved.

Following problems within the association in 1974, Korean Paduk took on another dimension with the appearance of Genius Cho Hoon-Hyun.

Cho Hoon-Hyun broke the world record with his achievement of being the youngest professional at 9. He then became the last protege of Segoe, who was teacher of Wu Ching Yen and Hashimoto Utaro, learning for 10 years there before returning to Korea to enter the army.

Taking the ChoeGoWi title in 1974, Cho started his "long march of one man domination" that lasted 15 years. Cho had a clean sweep of tournaments on 3 separate occasions (1980, 82, 86) - his only rival was Suh Bong-Soo, who was not a competitor. However his own pupil, Yi Chang-Ho, slowly took his titles from him one by one in the late 80s

The contemporary Kuk Su lineage continues, lead by Cho Nam-Chul and followed by Kim In, Cho Hoon-Hyun, and Yi Chang-Ho. These players have turned Korean Paduk into one of the strongest in the world.

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8 / The Golden Age of Korean Paduk

1989, when the international championships began, was the start of a new global era.

The first Ing's Cup was won by Cho Hoon-Hyun, after defeating Chinese competitor Nei Wei-Ping 3-2. Cho Hoon-Hyun, Yi Chang-Ho and Cho Chi-Hoon became enormously popular in Korea.

On the other hand, domestic tournaments were shared among the 4 strongest players dubbed 'the Gang of four' (Cho Hoon-Hyun, Suh Bong-Soo, Yoo Chang-Hyuk and Yi Chang-Ho). Yi Chang-Ho made people wonder about whether the relationship between human maturity and possessing Paduk skills were important when he took his first title at the age of 13.

Before this, it was believed that to be a highly skilled Paduk player, age, wisdom and experience were needed. Yi Chang-Ho challenged that theory.

In 1991, Yi won the 3rd J.Tong Yang Security Cup and became the youngest international title holder at the age of 16 by beating Rin Kai-Ho 3-2. The following year he defended his title by beating Cho Chi-Hoon 3-0. He continued breaking world records.

In 1989 he played 111 official games, in 1990, he achieved 41 consecutive wins and 90 wins in official games, and in 1994 he won 13 tournaments. These statistics became world records.

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9 / Korea Dominates World Titles

Korean players achieved 8 consecutive wins in international tournaments during 1993-94, and The Korean Gang of Four became the strongest players internationally, with each member claiming one of the four world titles up for grabs. They were now known as The Gang of Four in the World.

Korea won the 1st Jin Ro Cup (3 nation team competition), Suh Bong-Soo won the 2nd Ing's Cup, Yi Chang-Ho won the 4th Tong Yang Security's Cup, and Yu Chang-Hyuk won the 5th Fujitsu Cup. Korea eventually won all the international championships in 1993. Then in 1994, Korea won the 2nd JinRo Cup, Cho Hoon-Hyun won the 5th Tong Yang Security Cup and the 6th Fujitsu Cup. Cho Hoon-Hyun achieved a personal record by winning all the international tournaments at least once (a feat known as a 'Cycling Hit' in Korea).

Korea won the third Jin Ro cup in 1995, but Ma Shiao-Chun of China put an end to Korea's winning streak by winning the 6th Tong Yang Security's Cup and the 7th Fujitsu Cup.

In the year 1996, Lee Chang-Ho dominated the international championships, grabbing 5 titles. Lee won the Jin Ro Cup in February and defeated Ma Chiao-Chun 3-1 to win the Tong Yang Cup in March. In May, at the Asian TV Championship held in China, he beat Yoo Chang-Hyuk, winning the title two years in a row, and in August, he won the Fujitsu Cup held in Japan by defeating Ma Chiao-Chun again.

Lee Defeated Ma and Takemia 2-0 respectively at the 1996 Strongest Paduk player in the World and proved that he is the top player in the world.

He was also dominating the domestic title competitions. On the other hand, Yoo Chang-Hyuk won the third Ing's Cup so that Korea had this title three times consecutively. As of July 1995, Han Guk Kiwon had 128 professional players. There are currently 17 domestic tournaments, and 3 international tournaments that are sponsored by Korea.

There are 2 team competitions for young professionals, one with China and the other with Japan. There are 30 amateur championships that are viable.

There is no doubt that Korean Paduk is presently riding the wave of success, accompanied by a great deal of support and astonishment.